

lies between the different early care and education sites. Resources were provided to help participants know how to initiate partnerships between child care, Head Start, and public school districts. Also, individuals learned about the services that others provide for the children and families within their communities. For many, it was an eye opening experience.

The third level evolved out of an Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education; the project is entitled *Building Partnerships for Early Steps to Literacy*. An infrastructure is being built in one rural community in southeast Oklahoma to accomplish specific outcomes within a community for children, families, administrators, and teachers. A model will be developed to support chil-

dren's transition from early childhood settings to the public school. The model engages child care, family child care homes, and Head Start to consider issues of professional development, parent engagement, and community outreach. The results will be published in a case study that will be available in early 2005.

Building partnerships or collaborations is a difficult task because there are attitudes, positive and negative, differing experiences and knowledge levels of staff in early care and education settings, perspectives of funding agencies as to what can and cannot be done with funding, and communities in which it is difficult to bring together all of the stakeholders. It is critical to be positive and to believe in the process of working together by building relationships and fostering effective communication.

Customizing Parenting Education

H. Wallace Goddard
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To treat all parents with the same advice may be similar to treating all illnesses with the same prescription medication. Although there are some vitamins all need (and general principles that can be useful to all parents), different strengths and needs of individual parents call for customized treatment.

Customized parent education, however, requires customized assessment. That is difficult in the world of mass communication and group parent education. Fortunately, technology is creating new options.

At Auburn University, Kreg Edgmon and Wally Goddard developed a parent assessment based on the National Extension Parent Education Model

(NEPEM) (Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994). All items in the parent assessment were tested with professional parenting educators across the country. This resulted in a pool of almost 500 parent assessment items.

About 30 items were selected for each of the 6 dimensions of NEPEM. Computer programmers at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension then created a system for allowing parents to assess their parenting strengths online. There are several unique features to this assessment system, which is entitled Parent Self-Assessment (PSA):

- Each anonymous user may establish a unique account and re-take the test or its subparts as many times as he or she wishes. This allows the PSA to be used to gauge progress over time.
- The assessment offers users an opportunity to complete a short assessment of all six parenting areas (43 items) or to do a more in-

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depth assessment in any or all of the six areas (an average of 27 items per area).

- All dialogue is framed from a strengths perspective. There is no assumption that the user's educational focus should be in the area with the lowest scores. Some users may choose to enlarge areas of strength.
- The assessment gives detailed feedback to users including scores displayed with bar charts and the completed items listed by level of mastery. By examining the items in any given measure, a parent can become familiar with the behaviors that establish competence in that area.
- The assessment invites users to give feedback on their perception of the accuracy of the assessment. Parents' global self-assessments are important independent indicators of their functioning as parents.
- Upon completion of the assessment, the program offers users an opportunity to get additional information in any of the six areas. With time, more links and resources will be added.
- Data will be collected anonymously on users' scores (both baseline and repeats) as well as users' perception of accuracy.

An additional measure of children's behavior will be added soon to PSA. The measure will provide parents with additional feedback and allow researchers to explore the relationship between the PSA dimensions and child outcomes. Parenting educators can use the PSA to provide self-assessment for participants at any time interval.

Parent self-assessment may prove to be a valuable aid in making parenting education more effective and in conducting research on the strengths and educational preferences of parents.

The Parent Self-Assessment is available at www.arfamilies.org (Click on "Family Life" then on "Parent Self Assessment (PSA).") For more information, contact Goddard at wgoddard@uaex.edu or Dennis at sdennis@uaex.edu.

References

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Sustaining Parenting Education in WI

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How can educators ensure that a good parenting program continues to be offered in the community year after year? A project in Wisconsin illustrates one way to create this sustained commitment and

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funding. This project has worked well, has been fairly easy and inexpensive, and has even led to new opportunities for parenting education.

The project is a monthly, age-paced parenting newsletter, written by faculty at the state university and mailed to all parents who give birth at local hospitals. (See www.uwex.edu/ccs/flp/parenting).

The cost is less than \$10 per family per year. If a county has 500 births per year, \$5,000 needs to be raised annually. Each county Extension office